

Message Text

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ACTION AF-18

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 L-03 NSC-07 CIAE-00 COME-00 EB-11

INR-10 LAB-06 NSAE-00 RSC-01 SIL-01 PM-07 DODE-00

PA-04 USIA-15 PRS-01 SP-03 AID-20 CG-00 DOTE-00 DRC-01

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R 231514Z MAY 74

FM AMEMBASSY LAGOS

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 4160

INFO AMEMBASSY DAKAR

AMEMBASSY N

AMEMBASSY NAIMEY

LIMITED OFFICIAL USE LAGOS 4528

E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: ELAB, NI

SUBJECT: LAGOS PORT STRIKE STATUS REPORT

REF: (A) LAGOS 4441; (B) LAGOS 4492

SUMMARY: LAGOS DOCKS RESUMED LIMITED WORK SCHEDULE
BEGINNING MORNING MAY 22, WITH WORKERS UNDER POLICE
PROTECTION. LABOR MINISTRY OFFICIAL STATES MORE WORKERS
RETURNED TO WORK MAY 23 BUT STRIKE NOT YET OVER. HE
FEELS SITUATION IS PROMISING BUT NEXT 48 HOURS SHOULD
REVEAL WHETHER FMG HAS EFFECTIVELY ENDED DOCK STRIKE.
END SUMMARY

1. WORKERS FROM TWO LARGE DOCK CONTRACTORS RETURNED
TO WORK MORNING MAY 22 UNDER POLICE PROTECTION. PORT
MANAGER ADDRESSED MASS MEETING OF STRIKERS AFTERNOON
MAY 22 TO INFORM THEM NIGERIAN PORTS AUTHORITY WAS BOUND BY
FMG WAGE FREEZE, THEREFORE STRIKE WAS FUTILE AND WORKERS SHOULD
RETURN TO JOBS. MAJORITY OF STRIKERS APPEARED WILLING ACCEPT
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THIS BUT MILITANT GROUP ARGUED FOR CONTINUATION OF STRIKE

UNTIL DEMANDS MET. ACCORDING TO LABOR MINISTRY ASSISTANT DIRECTOR LABINJOH, A NUMBER OF ADDITIONAL STRIKERS RETURNED TO WORK MORNING MAY 23 BUT STRIKE CANNOT BE CONSIDERED AS OVER. HE SAID SITUATION IS PROMISING, THOUGH ONE OR TWO ISSUES REMAIN TO BE RESOLVED, BUT EVENTS IN NEXT 48 HOURS WILL TELL IF FMG MOVES HAVE BEEN SUCCESSFUL.

3. FMG APPROACH APPEARS TO BE ONE OF CUTTING OFF STRIKE LEADER ODULANA FROM RANK AND FILE, WHILE TAKING HARD LINE ON NOT GIVING IN TO STRIKERS' DEMANDS. DEPUTY GENERAL SECRETARY OF AMALGAMATED DOCKWORKERS, TRANSPORT AND GENERAL WORKERS UNION, A.E. OKON, INFORMED EMBOFF THAT ODULANA HAS NOT BEEN SEEN ON DOCKS SINCE MONDAY AND STRIKERS BEGINNING TO ACCEPT ARGUMENTS BY LEGITIMATE UNION LEADERS THAT STRIKE IS FUTILE. OKON NOTES DAILY-PAID STRIKERS HAVE NO CASH RESERVE TO FALL BACK ON AND EVERY DAY OF STRIKE CUTS THEIR INCOME. HE PREDICTS STRIKE WILL END IN NEXT FEW DAYS AS WORKERS' MONEY RUNS OUT. IN HIS VIEW, LAGOS PORT SHOULD BE BACK TO NORMAL OPERATIONS BY MAY 24 OR 25, AND THERE IS VERY LITTLE POSSIBILITY OF STRIKE SPREADING TO ANY OTHER PORTS.

4. OKON STATES ODULANA HAS OVERPLAYED HIS HAND AND IS LOSING SUPPORT AMONG DOCKWORKERS FOR HIS FAILURE TO PRODUCE RAPID RESULTS. LEFT-WING UNION LEADERS ON DOCKS AND IN NTUF, ACCORDING TO OKON, OPENLY DISAGREE WITH ODULANA'S TACTICS AND APPEAR WILLING TO LET HIM TAKE BRUNT OF ANY FMG RETALIATORY ACTION.

4. COMMENT: WHILE SUCCESS OF FIRM FMG LINE IS NOT YET CERTAIN, IT WOULD APPEAR THIS WAS ONLY VIABLE COURSE OF ACTION FMG COULD TAKE IF IT HOPES TO KEEP WAGE FREEZE IN FORCE. INDICATIONS OF RISING UNREST AMONG WORKERS OVER RISING PRICES AND DECREASING PURCHASING POWER ARE BECOMING MORE EVIDENT EACH DAY. STRONG SHOW OF FMG DETERMINATION TO KEEP LID ON WAGES UNTIL AFTER AUGUST REVIEW OF WAGE FREEZE SHOULD HELP REDUCE TENSION AMONG WORKERS AND HOPEFULLY MAINTAIN SEMBLANCE OF ORDER IN INDUSTRIAL RELATIONS SCENE FOR NEXT FEW MONTHS.
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